

With many floures, and I shal nat iye;
for al the world, right as the dayesye
Icoroned is with whyte leues lyte,
Swich were the floures of hir coroun whyte,
for of o perle fyn and oriental
hir whyte coroun was ymaked al;
for which the whyte coroun, above the grene,
Made hir lyk a daysie for to sene,
Considered eek the fret of gold above.

CLOTHED was this mighty god of
love
Of silk, ybrouded ful of grene
greves;
A garlond on his heed of rose/leues
Steked al with lilie floures newe;
But of his face I can nat seyn the hewe,
for sekirly his face shoon so brighte,
That with the gleem astoned was the sighte;
A furlong/way I mighte him nat beholde.
But at the laste in hande I saw him holde
Two fyrr dartes, as the gledes rede;
And aungellich his wenges gan he sprede.
And al be that men seyn that blind is he,
Hlgate me thoughte he mighte wel ysee;
for sternely on me he gan biholde,
So that his lokyng doth myn herte colde.

AND by the hande he held the noble quene,
Corouned with whyte, & clothed al in grene,
So womanly, so benigne, and so meke,
That in this world, thogh that men wolde seke,
Half hir beautee shulde men nat finde
In creature that formed is by kinde,
Hir name was Alceste the debonayre;
I prey to God that ever falle she fayre!
for ne hadde confort been of hir presence,
I had be deed, withouten any defence,
for drede of Loves wordes and his chere,
As, whan tyme is, hereafter ye shal here.
Byhind this god of love, upon this grene,
I saw cominge of ladyes nyntene
In ryal abite, a ful esy pas,
And after hem com of women swich a tras
That, sin that God Adam had made of erthe,
The thredde part of women, ne the ferthe,
Ne wende I nat by possibilitee
Hadden ever in this world ybe;
And trewe of love thise women were echoon.

Noon,
That, right anoon as that they gonne espye
This flour, which that I clepe the dayesye,
ful sodeinly they stinten alle atones,
And kneled adoun, as it were for the nones.
And after that they wenten in compas,
Daunsinge aboute this flour an esy pas,
And songen, as it were in carole/wayse,
This balade, which that I shal yow devyse.

Balade.

WYD, Absolon, thy gilte tresses clere;
Ester, ley thou thy meknesse al adoun;
Hyd, Jonathas, al thy frendly manere;
Penalopee, and Marcia Catoun,

Mak of your wyfhod no comparisoun;
Hyde ye your beautes, Isoude and Elyne,
Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne.

Faire body, lat hit nat appere,
Lavyne; and thou, Lucresse of Rome toun,
And Polixene, that boghte love so dere,
Eek Cleopatre, with al thy passoun,
Hyde ye your trouthe in love and your renoun;
And thou, Tisbe, that hast for love swich peyne;
Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne.

HERRO, Dido, Laudomia, alle in fere,
Eek Phyllis, hanging for thy Demophoun,
And Canace, espyed by thy chere,
Ysiphile, betrayed with Jasoun,
Mak of your trouthe in love no bost ne soun;
Nor Ypermistre or Adriane, ne pleyne;
Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne.

WHAN that this balade al ysongen was,
Upon the softe and swote grene gras
They setten hem ful softely adoun,
By ordre alle in compas, alle enveroun.
first sat the god of love, and than this quene
With the whyte coroun, clad in grene;
And sithen al the remenant by and by,
As they were of degree, ful curteisly;
Ne nat a word was spoken in the place
The mountance of a furlong/way of space.

LENING faste by under a bente,
A hood, to knowen what this peple mente,
As stille as any stoon; til at the laste,
The god of love on me his eye caste,
And seyde, Who resteth ther? and I answerde
Unto his axing, whan that I him berde,
And seyde, Sir, hit am I; and cam him neer,
And salued him. Quod he: What dostow heer
In my presence, and that so boldely?
for it were better worthy, trewely,
A werm to comen in my sight than thou.

And why, sir, quod I, and hit lyke yow?
for thou, quod he, art therto nothing able.
My servaunts been alle wyse and honourable,
Thou art my mortal fo, and me warreyest,
And of myne olde servaunts thou misseyest,
And hinderest hem with thy translacioun,
And lettest folk to han devocioun
To serven me, and haldest hit folye
To troste on me. Thou mayst hit nat denye;
for in pleyn text, hit nedeth nat to glose,
Thou hast translat the Romauns of the Rose,
That is an heresye ageyns my lawe,
And makest wyse folk fro me withdrawe.
And thinkest in thy wit, that is ful cool,
That he nis but a verray propre fool
That loveth paramours, to harde and hote.
Wel wot I therby thou beginnest dote
As olde foles, whan hir spirit fayleth;
Than blame they folk, & wite nat what hem ayleth.
Hast thou nat mad in English eek the book
How that Crisseyde Troilus forsook,
In shewing how that women han don mis?

But natheles, answerme now to this,
Why noldest thou as wel han seyde goodnesse
Of women, as thou hast seyde wikkednesse?
Was ther no good matere in thy minde,
Ne in alle thy bokes coudest thou nat finde
Sum story of women that were goode and trewe?
Yis! God wot, sixty bokes olde and newe
Hast thou thyself, alle fulle of stories grete,
That bothe Romains and eek Grekes trete
Of sundry wemen, which lyf that they ladde,
And ever an hundred gode ageyn oon badde.
This knoweth God, and alle clerkes eke,
That usen swiche materes for to seke.
What seith Valerie, Titus, or Claudian?
What seith Jerome ageyns Jovinian?
How clene maydens, and how trewe wyves,
How stedfast widwes during al hir lyves,
Tellethe Jerome; and that nat of a fewe,
But, I dar seyn, an hundred on a rew;e;
That hit is pitee for to rede, and routh, e,
The wo that they enduren for hir trouthe.
for to hir love were they so trewe,
That, rather than they wolde take a newe,
They chosen to be dede in sundry wyse,
And deyden, as the story wol devyse;
And some were brend, and some were cut the hals,
And some dreyn, for they wolden nat be fals.
for alle heped they hir maydenhed,
Or elles wedlok, or hir widwehed.
And this thing was nat kept for holinesse,
But al for verray vertu and clenness, e,
And for men shulde sette on hem no lak;
And for they weren bethen, al the pak,
That were so sore adrad of alle shame.
These olde wemen kepte so hir name,
That in this world I trow men shal nat finde
A man that coude be so trewe and kinde,
As was the leste woman in that tyde.
What seith also the epistels of Ovyde
Of trewe wyves, and of hir labour?
What Vincent, in his Storial Mirour?
Eek al the world of autours maystow here,
Cristen and hethen, trefe of swich matere;
It nedeth nat alday thus for tendyte.
But yit I sey, what eyleth thee to wryte
The draf of stories, and forgo the corn?
By seint Venus, of whom that I was born,
Although that thou reneyed hast my lay,
As othere olde foles many a day,
Thou shalt repente hit, that hit shal be sene!
HAN spak Alceste, the worthieste quene,
And seyde: God, right of your curtesye,
Ye moten herknen if he can replye
Ageyns these points that ye han to him meved;
A god ne sholde nat be thus agreved,
But of his deitee he shal be stable,
And therto rightful and eek merciable.
He shal nat rightfully his yre wreke
Or he have herd the tother party speke.
Aline is nat gospel that is to yow pleyned;
The god of love herth many a tale yfeyned.
for in your court is many a losengeour,
And many a queynte totelere accusour,

That tabouren in your eres many a thing
for hate, or for jelous imagining,
And for to han with yow som daliaunce.
Envy (I prey to God yeve hir mischaunce!)
Is lavender in the grete court alway.
for she ne parteth, neither night ne day,
Out of the hous of Cesar; thus seith Dante;
Whoso that goth, alway she moot nat wante.
This man to yow may wrongly been accused,
Ther as by right him oghte ben excused.
Or elles, sir, for that this man is nyce,
He may translate a thing in no malyce,
But for he useth bokes for to make,
And takth non heed of what matere he take;
Therfor he wroot the Rose and eek Crisseyde
Of innocence, and niste what he seyde;
Or him was boden make thilke tweye
Of som persone, and durste hit nat withseye;
for he hath writen many a book er this.
He ne hath nat doon so greuously amis
To translaten that olde clerkes wryten,
As thogh that he of malice wolde endyten
Despyt of love, and hadde himself ywroght.
This shulde a rightwys lord han in his thoght,
And nat be lyk tiraunts of Lumbardyde,
That usen wilfulhed and tirannye,
for he that king or lord is naturel,
him oghte nat be tiraunt ne cruel,
As is a fermour, to doon the harm he can.
He moste thinke hit is his lige man,
And that him oweth, of verray duete, e,
Shewen his peple pleyn benignitee,
And wel to here hir excusaciouns,
And hir compleyntes and peticiouns,
In duewe tyme, whan they shal hit profre.
This is the sentence of the philosopre:
A king to kepe his liges in justyee;
Withouten doute, that is his offyee.
And therto is a king ful depe ysworn,
ful many an hundred winter heerbifom;
And for to kepe his lordes hir degree,
As hit is right and skilful that they be
Enhaunced and honoured, and most dere,
for they ben half/goddes in this world here,
This shal he doon, bothe to pore and riche,
Al be that here stat be nat aliche,
And han of pore folk compassioun.
for lo, the gentil kind of the lioun!
for whan a flye offendeth him or byteth,
He with his tayl away the flye smyteth
Al esily; for, of his genterye,
him deyneth nat to wreke him on a flye,
As doth a curre or elles another beste.
In noble corage oghte been areste,
And weyen every thing by equitee,
And ever han reward to his owen degree.
for, sir, hit is no maystrie for a lord
To dampne a man withoute answer or word;
And, for a lord, that is ful foul to use,
And if so be he may him nat excuse,
But axeth mercy with a sorweful herte,
And profreth him, right in his bare sherte,
To been right at your owne jugement,